

^MILE ZOLA, NOVELIST AND  
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and Zola himself, somewhat diffident as to its merit, at last decided to withdraw it altogether. But early in 1878 the great uproar occasioned by " L'Assommoir " inspired the directors of the Palais Eoyal Theatre with a fresh desire to stage this play by a man whose name was now on everybody's lips. They urged him to consent, and he ultimately did so, making various alterations which the directors deemed to be advisable. The play was then rehearsed again, and both the managers and the actors, now as sanguine as they had previously been doubtful, imagined that it would prove a triumph. But at the first performance (May 6, 1878 ) the audience, after receiving the first act with favour, became angry during the second, and hissed the third freely. In vain did Geoffrey, the leading comedian, endeavour to announce the author's name according to usage; such a tremendous din arose when he appeared before the footlights, that he was unable to make himself heard. Meantime Zola, in the slips, was saying to the crestfallen directors: " You see I was right. You insisted on staging the piece in spite of me. Your earlier decision to drop it was the better one." In accordance with custom, he had arranged to celebrate the first performance by a supper at Ve'four's. In a sense

the repast was a funereal one, though it proved  
by no means  
doleful, for Zola took the failure of his play right  
cheerfully,  
merely regretting that he would now have to  
modify the  
order of the work which he had proposed to  
undertake that  
year. Had " Le Bouton de Rose " been  
successful, he had  
intended to begin another play, based on  
his novel "La  
Cure"e," but that would now have to wait  
while he started  
on the next novel of his series. Some days  
later, when din-  
ing at M. Charpentier's, he told Goncourt that  
the failure of